COVID-19

JULY 11, 2024

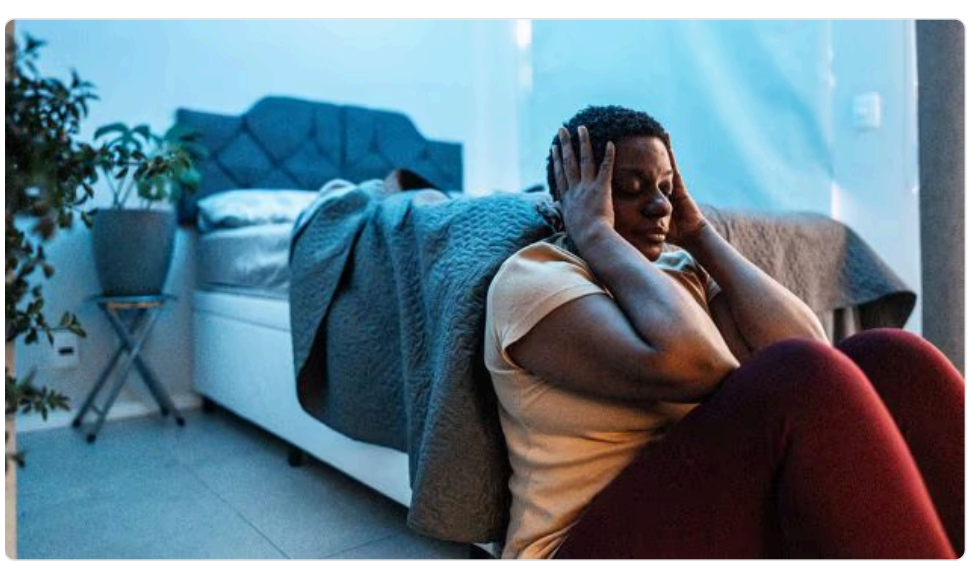
CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders.

Signs and Symptoms of Long COVID

KEY POINTS

- Long COVID can include a wide range of ongoing symptoms and conditions that can last weeks, months, or even years.
- Most people with Long COVID symptoms see significant improvement after 3 months, while others may see improvement up to 6 months after symptoms first appear.
- Some people may experience health problems from different types and combinations of symptoms that require comprehensive care.
- Long COVID symptoms and conditions can result in disability.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you think you or your child has Long COVID.

Signs and symptoms



Long COVID symptoms can last weeks, months, or even years.

People with Long COVID can have a wide variety of symptoms that can range from mild to severe and may be similar to symptoms from other illnesses. Symptoms can last weeks, months, or years after COVID-19 illness and can emerge, persist, resolve, and reemerge over different lengths of time. Long COVID may not affect everyone the same way. Some people can experience health problems from different types and combinations of symptoms that may:

- Be difficult to recognize or diagnose
- Require comprehensive care
- Result in disability

Fact

Fatigue, brain fog, and post-exertional malaise (PEM) are commonly reported symptoms, but more than 200 Long COVID symptoms have been identified.

Other commonly reported symptoms (not a comprehensive list):

General symptoms

- Tiredness or fatigue that interferes with daily life

- Symptoms that get worse after physical or mental effort
- Fever

Respiratory and heart symptoms

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Chest pain
- Fast-beating or pounding heart (also known as heart palpitations)

Neurological symptoms

- Difficulty thinking or concentrating (sometimes referred to as "brain fog")
- Headaches
- Sleep problems
- Dizziness when you stand up (lightheadedness)
- Pins-and-needles feelings
- Change in smell or taste
- Depression or anxiety

Digestive Symptoms

- Diarrhea
- Stomach pain
- Constipation

Other symptoms

- Joint or muscle pain
- Rash
- Changes in menstrual cycles

Symptoms that are hard to explain and manage

Some people with Long COVID have symptoms that are hard to explain or difficult to manage. There is no laboratory test that can determine if your unexplained symptoms are due to Long COVID. People with these unexplained symptoms may sometimes even be misunderstood or experience stigma. This can result in a delay in diagnosis and receiving the appropriate care or treatment. Long COVID treatment is focused on managing symptoms, reducing their impact on daily activities, and improving your quality of life.

Have Long COVID symptoms?

Talk to your healthcare provider if you are experiencing symptoms that are hard to explain or that persist, or if you think you or your child has Long COVID.

Living with Long COVID

Complications

Some people, especially those who had severe COVID-19, may experience multi-organ effects or autoimmune conditions lasting weeks, months, or even years after COVID-19 illness. Multi-organ effects can involve many body systems, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, skin, and brain. Symptoms for many of these multi-organ complications are similar to commonly reported Long COVID symptoms. As a result of these effects, people who have had COVID-19 may be more likely to develop new or worsening of health conditions such as:

- Diabetes
- Heart conditions
- Blood clots
- Neurological conditions

Post-intensive care syndrome

People with post-intensive care syndrome (PICS) may have an increased risk for Long COVID

People experiencing any severe illness or hospitalization may develop problems such as post-intensive care syndrome (PICS). While PICS is not specific to infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, it may occur and contribute to the person's experience of Long COVID. Health effects from PICS may begin when a person is in an intensive care unit (ICU), and can include:

- Muscle weakness
- Problems with thinking and judgment
- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

For people who experience PICS following a COVID-19 diagnosis, it is difficult to determine whether these health problems are caused by a severe illness, the virus itself, or a combination of both.

Long COVID and myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome

Some people with Long COVID experience symptoms similar to those reported by people who suffer from other poorly understood chronic illnesses that may occur after other infections, such as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS). People with ME/CFS and other infection-associated illnesses can have difficulty

- Recognizing and identifying symptoms of their illness
- Being believed by family, friends and healthcare providers
- Getting a diagnosis
- Managing their symptoms or conditions

CDC is working with partners to better understand and support people suffering from Long COVID, ME/CFS, and other chronic illnesses.

Resources

Disability

- Guidance on "Long COVID" as a Disability Under the ADA

Symptom resources

- Long COVID Symptom Checker PDF
- Identification and Management of Mental Health Symptoms and Conditions Associated With Long COVID PDF
- Chronic Symptoms Following Infections
- Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)

Mental Health

- For patients with long COVID, look out for psychiatric sequelae

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases; Coronavirus and Other Respiratory Viruses Division